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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

"The Need for Trust and Better Communication"

Former chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan Nat
Bellocchi wrote in the pro-independence "Taipei Times"
(10/22):

"The Double Ten National Day speech by President Chen Shui-bian lifted some of the tension that still exists in the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, but events connected with the recent full-page advertisement by Koo Kwang-ming in two leading American newspapers, and a symposium on Taiwan's Constitution and U.S.-Taiwan relations, show that some bilateral tension and mistrust remains -- based more on evasion of reality than any misunderstanding. It is not good at a time when the United States must work closer than ever with Taiwan through understanding and dialogue. .

"There is much to ponder in the broader tripartite relationship. One immediate task will be to determine what can or should be done once elections are completed and policy review begins. The United States will need policies that take into account the mainstream opinion while maintaining good relations with China.

"If one looks at what lies ahead for Taiwan -- a new constitution, a referendum and perhaps dialogue with China -- the United States may find it necessary to become quite intrusive in Taiwan's domestic affairs. That's dicey in any event, and in any country. Foreign intrusion in domestic matters is never welcome.

"The United States will have to work with that reality. The core need is close, effective and broader communication with one another. In Taiwan, there are frequent symposiums that invite American and other scholars to take part. The United States does this as well, but when it comes to Taiwan, it seldom if ever includes people who do not agree with U.S. policy. This is unfortunate, as understanding is the base for better communication between governments.

"One possibility in pursuing better government communication is for the United States to establish a cross-strait task force made up of deputy assistant secretaries -- or people of equivalent rank -- from the

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State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Council and perhaps others. This group would be tasked with producing a regular report to the president. The report could be drawn from a regular quarterly meeting of the group and their Taiwanese counterparts, and would include recommendations on any matter that should be addressed.

"The Taiwanese side would be expected to start a similar process to ensure the president is well informed. There is a need for presidential aides on both sides to be kept well informed about this relationship.

"Unfortunately, raising the frequency and level of communication tends to be seen in Taipei first and foremost in terms of high-profile visits or publicly announced bilateral meetings which strain the United States' relationship with China. The biggest obstacle to more regular, higher-level liaisons between the United States and Taiwan in national security matters, of course, is objections from China. Yet there have been similar, if less structured, liaisons in the past that were manageable. It does require trust, however, and broadening the number of people involved in this liaison strengthens government support on both sides.

"There are doubtless many other possibilities for enhancing communication. The United States has endorsed Chen's Oct. 10 speech, and one hopes that it could eventually result in a dialogue between Taiwan and China. Even so, it is unlikely to remove the U.S.' need for a continuing and perhaps even closer relationship

with Taiwan."

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